

successful until the destruction of the town by the American troops in 1813 wasted its volumes and impoverished its subscribers, so that it shortly after quietly passed out of existence.

PUBLIC SCHOOL LIBRARIES.

In 1848 the late Dr. Ryerson drafted a school bill which contained provisions for school and township libraries, and succeeded in awakening a deep interest in the subject. Ever anxious to impress on his hearers the importance of libraries as the keystone to a free educational system, he urged it on every opportunity. Lord Elgin, at that time Governor-General, was so strongly impressed with the importance of the movement that he styled it the "crown and glory of the institutions of this Province." In 1854 Parliament passed the requisite act and granted him the necessary funds to carry out his views in the matter. The regulations of the department authorized each County Council to establish four classes of libraries:—

An ordinary Common School library in each schoolhouse for the use of the children and ratepayers.

A general public lending library available to all the ratepayers in the municipality.

A professional library of books on teaching, school organization, language, and kindred subjects, available for teachers only.

A library in any public institution under the control of the municipality, for the use of the inmates, or in any county jail, for the use of the prisoners.

To aid this work, a book depository was established in the education office to enable the smaller libraries to obtain readily good literature. The books were supplied at cost, and a grant of 100 per cent. on the amount remitted was added in books by the

department. During the 36 years of its existence 1,407,140 volumes were so supplied.

MECHANICS' INSTITUTES.

The proposal to establish the second class was, however, premature, and accordingly, finding that Mechanics' Institutes, supported by members' fees, were being developed throughout the towns and villages, the Education Department wisely aided the movement by giving a small grant proportionate to the amount contributed by the members for the purchase of books and reaching a maximum of \$200, afterwards increased, under altered conditions, to \$400 annually. In 1856 these had grown to number 26, in 1880, 74, and in 1896 to 292. The number of books possessed by these 292 libraries is 404,605, or an average of 1,385 each. With a total membership of 32,603, the issue of books for home reading was 700,958, or an average of 24.6 for each member, which is a very creditable return, considering that only 30 per cent. of the books are fiction.

In 1895 the Minister of Education brought in a bill, which came into force in May, changing the name "Mechanics' Institute" into "Public Library." By this act the directors of any Mechanics' Institute were empowered to transfer the property of the institute to the municipal corporation on condition that the library be free. This can be done without passing a by-law or requiring a vote from the people—a large number have already availed themselves of it.

In the cities and larger towns, however, the Mechanics' Institute, with its limited number of subscribers, was found unequal to the task assigned it, and accordingly in 1882 the free libraries' act was passed, based upon similar enactments in Britain and the United States.